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Prof. Semmes 1/3/87

AN ESSAY

ON

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE,

AND ON

VOCAL CULTURE

AS INDISPENSABLE TO AN ÆSTHETIC APPRECIATION
OF POETRY.

BY

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EDITOR OF "CHAUCER'S LEGENDE OF GOODE WOMEN;" PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND
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*From Prof. Desilver
Apr. 1894*

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TO MY PUPILS

THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED.

H. C.

(iii)

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

ON THE

STUDY OF LITERATURE, AND ON VOCAL CULTURE

AS INDISPENSABLE TO AN ÆSTHETIC

APPRECIATION OF POETRY.

BY HIRAM CORSON, A. M.

**SO THEY READ IN THE BOOK IN THE LAW OF GOD
DISTINCTLY, AND GAVE THE SENSE, AND CAUSED THEM
TO UNDERSTAND THE READING.**

NEHEMIAH, Chap. VIII., v. 8.

(xiv)

PART I.

ON THE STUDY OF LITERATURE.

LITERARY study, in its higher form, aims to treat a literature as a whole, and endeavours to trace the several and successive stages of its development, to discover the various causes, political, social, educational, religious, to which the productions of any period owe their peculiarities. Such an aim also embraces a comparison of the genius and productions of authors of the same period and of different periods. It is also within its scope to trace the development of ideas relative to literary art, and the different views held at different periods as to the legitimate functions of the several departments of Literature. There is no study more interesting than this, treating, as it does, of the infinite phases and attitudes which the human mind presents under different circumstances, and yet remaining in all places and in all times, essentially the same. But it is a difficult and ambitious task, even when undertaken by men of the widest and ripest

knowledge, the deepest imaginative insight, and the subtlest analytical power. The present century has produced perhaps not more than two men capable of writing a history of the development of English Literature; I allude to Thomas De Quincey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. That they possessed the requisite qualifications no one who is intimately acquainted with their writings can deny; and from their writings it is also evident that their powers pointed in this direction as the one most favourable to their fullest and most genial exercise.

A less ambitious aim in literary study, is the study of individual productions as distinct works of art, without any special regard to their relative value and historical significance. To take a poem, for instance, and discover the secret of its æsthetic power, and the various elements of this power, is something within the reach of any one of ordinary emotional appreciation and analytical skill. Such a study requires for its successful prosecution no very extensive knowledge of general literature, and no great powers of analysis and synthesis, and is, of course, the indispensable preparation for the higher study I have mentioned. But true to a principle which seems to underlie our present systems of rapid education,—namely, to rush, at once, “*in medias res*,”—the History of English Literature is often studied in our Institutions of learning, before there is any, not even the most superficial, acquaintance with individual productions. If

they are studied at all, they are usually studied in fragments, in the shape of "Beautiful Extracts," or "Moral Passages," and the advantage derived from the study of organisms is thus entirely forfeited. The one mode is as inferior to the other, as the study of bits of china would be, to contemplating the beautiful and graceful vase of which they once formed parts. In the study of the mere material, we lose sight of the beautiful form into which the artist has moulded it. It is by the *form* which he has given to his manifold material, and which is the basis of all high æsthetic impression, that he is to be estimated. What has he made or moulded out of his material? is the question to be asked. How has he organized it, and with what results? With what success has he brought all details under the pervading, vitalizing influence of a dominant idea, causing them to impart to his work a richness and an intense vitality? Has he wisely rejected everything superfluous, or are there excrescences which contribute nothing to the general moral impression? Is his rhetoric in the web of his thought, or is it only sewed on, like gold lace on a coat? Are his thoughts evolved with a skilful and graceful transition from one to the other? or are they abrupt, insulated, capricious, with little or no *law* of succession? No number of brilliant passages will compensate for a deficiency in the organic unity and vitality of a work. The elements are nothing without "the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine,"

There is no objection, however, to storing the memory with the beautiful passages of concentrated energy with which the higher poetry in the contriving spirit of its eloquence, abounds. The more of such passages every one has at his command, the better. No means, however superficial, for increasing our familiarity with the ideal world of Poetry, should be discouraged. Converse with Poetry should not be regarded merely as an elegant and refined pastime, — but as an essential to our spiritual life, as bread is to our physical life. Without its kindly influence, life becomes sordid, selfish, and commonplace. Daily intercourse with the great Masters of Song is also the best safeguard against the temptations which beset us in the world of current literature. The most popular works the press sends forth are those which gratify an appetite for the surprising and the thrilling. “It is of the greatest importance,” says John Ruskin, “not only for Art’s sake, but for all kinds of sake, in these days of book-deluge, to keep out of the salt-swamps of literature, and live on a little rocky island of your own, with a spring and a lake in it pure and good.”

Let Poetry, then, be studied and communed with in every possible way. It will do nobody any harm. But in a system of mental and æsthetic culture, the leading design should be, the study of poems and other literary art-products, as organisms, which are to be comprehended, not in their parts only, but in their totality. The more intense a man’s intellectual and

emotional life becomes, the more he demands effects produced by the organization of manifold elements — elements fused by the alchemy of the imagination into a new and living whole, whose synthesis calls forth that harmonious energizing of the soul, which constitutes its highest life and delight.

But let it not be supposed that the pleasure derived from the productions of Poetry or of any other of the fine arts, is due to a *conscious* energizing to comprehend them. The pleasure derived from a work of the imagination is in proportion to the degree of *unconsciousness* with which all its appeals are responded to. Works which strictly belong to Literature, — that is, works which speak to the understanding through the emotions, — should not be read, of course, as those which address the insulated understanding. We must come to the reading of the former, for the first time, in the least self-conscious state possible; we must avoid analysis as much as we can, and place ourselves passively under the influence of our author.

“We get no good,”

says Mrs. Browning, in her “Aurora Leigh,”

“By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits . . . so much help
By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves, and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book’s profound,
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth —
’Tis then we get the right good from a book.”

The sensibilities are the peculiar domain of the Fine Arts, and by a transcendent preëminence of the greatest of the Fine Arts — Poetry; and if, by a premature analysis, the sensibilities are not allowed their requisite play, the leading purpose of a work of the Imagination is defeated. We should not attempt analysis until we have received an emotional impression from the whole; in some cases, many emotional impressions, according to the extent of a work, and the degree of its sensuousness. We may then seek to discover the various elements of this impression, and by a more conscious and intimate knowledge of the respective functions of these elements, attain to a higher impression from the whole. This higher impression will lead to a still more minute analysis by which we shall discover subtler elements of effect which the first analysis did not reveal. This more minute analysis will be followed by a still higher impression from the whole; and thus the process will continue of an alternation of general impression and analysis until we have grown up to the work, as it were: we fully respond to the emotional appeal made by the artist; we grasp his work in its *entireness*; that which was at first consciously and with effort, received, reaches in time higher and subtler organs of discernment, where is breathed the purer air of unconsciousness and spontaneity.

Take, for example, the "Locksley Hall" of Tennyson. On the first reading of this "grand hymn of

human progress," the magnificent swell of the rhythm, and the richness of the melody, will be likely to produce the most decided impression. In other words, the first impression will be, what it should be to a great extent in every true poem, a sensuous one — accompanied, of course, by a *general* understanding of the poem. With this impression, we may be content for a number of readings, and not be disposed to look further into the poem, especially if we happen to take it up in a passive mood. At another time, when we are more disposed to be analytical, we may fix our attention upon the picturesqueness and passion of the language, the imagery, the lights and shades of the thoughts, and the suggestiveness of the vowel sounds, for in Poetry, words are not merely representatives of ideas, but are ivied over with emotional associations. The syntactical construction, even, will claim some attention, for this latter feature presents a number of difficulties in "Locksley Hall."

When the results of all these observations and the several impressions derived therefrom, shall have been absorbed in the general impression, we shall be disposed to penetrate still further—we shall endeavour to supply all the connecting links of the thought and feeling—and in the poem in question they are remarkably subtle—to discover how the poet, in the intensity of his inspiration, passed from one thought or one feeling to another thought or another feeling. A great poet, giving expression to a subtle and com-

plex sentiment, must necessarily be obscure to the ordinary reader, in whom such sentiment exists only potentially, and with its elements uncombined. It is not in the simple elements that one individual mind differs from another, but in their degree, and in the nature of their combination. The emotions which the great poet, or painter, or musician, experiences, are more complex than those experienced by men in general; and when they are expressed in words, in marble, in colours, or in sounds, it requires at first, an effort, and frequently, a long-continued effort, to go over the process of their combination, and clearly to apprehend the leading sentiment which was the controlling principle of the association

Imagination does not differ *essentially* from ordinary thinking—it follows the same laws, but those laws are more actively and harmoniously in force. It is ordinary thinking *intensified*. Imagination, to be sure, is always impassioned, which ordinary thinking is not; but *that* is the natural consequence of its intensity—the depths of the whole nature are stirred by it.

Every true poem is a piece of articulate music, which an ordinary Imagination must long practice upon before it can play it with a sufficient degree of spontaneousness and unconsciousness, to derive from it all the pleasure it is capable of imparting. The same process goes on in the contemplation of a picture or a statue—at first view the impression it produces may be quite an indifferent one; but repeated impres-

sions, each deepened by an analysis of previous ones, will finally fuse, if the work possesses a consistent, congruous unity, into one compound and harmonious feeling. As in the case of the poem, we grow up to the work. We grasp it as a whole and spontaneously. We are fully *informed* in regard to the work. Our feelings have been gradually tuned to respond to its emotional appeal.

Art owes its power chiefly to the magic garment of form, and not to what it *explicitly* teaches. The principle which underlies true art, and which the artist must consciously or unconsciously recognize, is that which Mrs. Browning has so happily expressed :

“paint a body well,
You paint a *soul* by implication, like
The grand first Master.”

Art educates, but it does not aim directly to instruct or indoctrinate. Its great function is to keep alive man's sensibilities and instincts, and thus to fit him for the perception of high spiritual truths. It is thus that Poetry and all the Fine Arts work moral results. The true Artist is an *implicit*, not an *explicit* teacher and moralist.

“The only real instructor of the human race,” says Orestes Brownson, “is the artist; and it is as artists, as men wrought up to the intensest life, and therefore acting from the full force of their being, that all the great and universally admitted philosophers have been able to quicken the race and set it forward to higher

and more comprehensive life. No man is really a philosopher till warmed up into the artist. Here is the sacredness of art, and the explanation of the fact, that the highest truths are always uttered by men when under the influence of the loftiest and most genuine Imagination."

There is a final stage at which we arrive in the study of a great poem, though modern criticism is too much inclined to make it the introductory one. When we are fully *informed* in regard to a work of the Imagination, in the way that has been pointed out, and in the art-sense of the word, we are disposed to go further—to seek in the artist's forms an undercurrent of meaning, to make them typical of ideas which do not essentially and absolutely belong to them. Into whatever recommends itself by the beauty of its form, the Imagination loves to infuse its own conceptions—to make it the casket of its own jewels, thus enriching it beyond its own intrinsic value. But we must not forget that although the Imagination *may* make this use of what it lovingly embraces by reason of its beauty of form, this beauty of form is an end to itself, and *for* itself was created by the artist, if he wrought it in a true artist spirit. All works of genius are richly suggestive, and are characterized by a flexibility of significance which often leads critics of a philosophic turn of mind to attribute to their authors definite purposes which they perhaps never dreamt of. The German critics, (though the best in the world,

certainly far superior to the English and French,) from a disposition to see further into a millstone than the nature of a millstone will allow, run sometimes into ridiculous extremes in regard to what they are so fond of designating the *Idea* of a work. To be assured of this fact, we have but to read the Shakspearean criticisms of Dr. Ulrici, in many respects marked by great ability, and the numberless criticisms which have appeared on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*. Goethe seems to have understood this tendency of his countrymen to dig for mysteries, and to have written the Second Part of *Faust* to give them plenty to do in that line for some generations. Certainly the interest which attaches to the Second Part of *Faust* is rather a philosophical than an art interest. It is in the interpreting of its symbolism that the critics are chiefly interested, and not in the wealth of its poetic life, for this has been justly denied the Second Part of *Faust*, unsurpassed as is the First Part as a production of the poetic faculty.

The legitimate interest which attaches to Art's forms, is an *emotional* interest, and is, in consequence, immeasurably higher in its nature than any merely intellectual interest could possibly be.

“One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.”

Herein consist the sacredness and loftiness of Art, that its grand function is to bring into play and pre-

serve in an healthful activity, the emotional side of our nature. Man is greater as an emotional than as an intellectual being. The sensibilities are the soil in which all his moral qualities have root and flourish. But in a high state of civilization where the efforts requisite to procure the necessities and luxuries of life, tend to sharpen men's wits at the expense of their sensibilities, special means are necessary to keep the latter alive, and this is done most effectually by the Fine Arts—by Music, by the Drama, by Painting, and more especially, by Poetry and other forms of Literature. All these are, or should be, the handmaids of Religion.

The highest, noblest, and most attractive order of manhood, is that wherein a just equilibrium is preserved between the intellect and the emotions. George Sand has well remarked, that for civilization to attain its highest perfection, man must become more womanly, and woman more manly. Tennyson has expressed the same idea in "The Princess." Speaking of the mutual relations of the sexes, the Prince is made to say:—

———"in the long years liker must they grow ;
 The man be more of woman, she of man ;
 He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
 Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world ;
 She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
 Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind."

All the great seers of the race have realized to an extent this condition—have been a well-poised duality

of the highest manhood and the highest womanhood. To a profound and refined sensibility to the influences of nature and of human life, they have united the highest discursive and analytical power. The sensibilities are the basis of the intuitional and the prophetic; through them man *feels* the truth before he *knows* it; and a condition of his knowing it, that is, defining it to his intellect, is, that he possess the requisite power to analyze the material furnished by his emotional nature. Emotion reaps the spiritual harvest, intellect gathers it into sheaves, threshes it, winnows the grain from the chaff, and makes it into nourishing bread. If the intellect fail to perform its part of the labour, the swarth rots in the field, and the intellect pays the penalty of its inaction, by famine, and a life-in-death listlessness. It has, also, to lay up provisions, not only for the summer, but for the winter. Though emotion may be an active workman, as long as it serves the intellect, yet, unless it be well cared for, it grows torpid in the cold weather, and the intellect must depend wholly upon the acquisitions of the spring and summer's work; and if these have not been sufficiently extensive, it too must experience winter's torpifying colds. Upon the life of the one, depends the life of the other. Neither can healthfully and vigourously exist by itself.

To preserve a proper equilibrium between the intellect and the sensibilities, is, perhaps, in the present organization of society, impossible. The circumstances

which beset the life of every one, tend to a one-sidedness of development. In fact, without a certain degree of one-sidedness in the individual, the various departments of human thought and learning would make but little progress. The absolute good of the individual, it seems, must be sacrificed to the good of society; at any rate, until political wisdom shall have devised means for reconciling the one with the other. But, in an abstract view, an emotional one-sidedness is preferable to an intellectual one-sidedness. A man may have scaled the loftiest heights of metaphysics; he may have attained to the highest generalizations which are within the possibilities of the human intellect; he may have weighed the stars, and measured their appalling distances; he may have descended into the bowels of the mountain, and found written there, in hieroglyphics of unmistakable meaning, the vast ages our planet has been dipping forward under sunshine and starry light; he may have learned the names and habits, the genera and species, of all the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and of the creatures that inhabit the mighty deep; he may, by a subtle chemistry, have resolved all matter into its primitive elements; he may have seized the lightning and forced it to carry his messages, in the twinkling of an eye, to the most distant corners of the earth; but, if the soft blue sky did never melt into his heart; if he never felt the witchery of the soft blue sky; if, like Wordsworth's Peter Bell,

“A primrose by a river’s brim
 A yellow primrose be to him,
 And it be nothing more ;”

if he has never been moved by the mysteries of the springtime, or dreamed amid the leafy pomps of summer; if his soul has never been softened, and filled with a luxurious sadness, by the departing glories and dreamy melancholy of the autumn woods; if he has never experienced a wild and strange delight in the desolation and the howling blasts of winter; if he be a stranger to the divine and rapturous joys of which, through music, faint and sly glimpses are sometimes caught; if he has never dreamed over some landscape, on the canvas of a great master, bathed in

“A light that never was on sea or land,”

or stood rapt before a figure of ideal loveliness; if his pulse has never been quickened, and his heart made to beat proudly by the radiant smiles and affectionate greetings of a wife and children, after a day’s rude commerce with the world; if, though ruthlessly deprived by Death of every earthly tie, he has not felt, that

“’Tis better to have loved and lost
 Than never to have loved at all,”—

he is, in spite of all his vast intellectual conquests, a very one-sided creature, and has but fed on husks, while many a poor servant in his father’s house has had bread, enough and to spare.

But reverse the picture. Suppose him to be ac-

quainted with all these emotional experiences, but to be totally ignorant of the great conquests and triumphs of the intellect; in the latter case, we would not consider him as one-sided as in the former; we would be disposed to regard him, not as one who had had but a beggarly heritage, but as one of the highly favoured of the children of men.

It was to express his profound conviction of this truth, that William Wordsworth wrote the most beautiful sonnet in our Literature:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for every thing, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

PART II.

VOCAL CULTURE.

AN indispensable condition of an æsthetic appreciation of high poetry, is, that it receive an adequate vocal expression. Without a high vocal culture,—without the highest vocal culture,—the study of poetry must be more or less imperfect. To say nothing of other elements of poetry which demand a vocal expression, for their proper appreciation, the musical element, which constitutes in the higher poetry so large a portion of the sentiment, and imparts that indefiniteness which attaches to all the productions of the Imagination, can alone be fully appreciated when adequately expressed by the voice. When I speak of the musical element of poetry, I mean, of course, all the subtle effects produced by the rhythm, by the variation of successive vowel sounds, by the rhyme, by the varied length of the lines, by pauses, by the acceleration and retardation of the verse, by the distribution of emphasis, and many other elements

of effect, some of which are unrecognizable and beyond the reach of analysis. Without the aid of the voice, all the charms and subtle effects derivable from these elements, must be lost in a great measure to the majority of silent readers.

There are, no doubt, readers of poetry, whose *imagination* of its musical suggestiveness sufficiently compensates for the absence of a vocal expression. But these must constitute a very limited class. With the great majority, much of the aroma of poetry must evaporate in silent reading.

Mrs. Siddons is said to have studied her greatest parts silently. This, we must suppose, she was enabled to do through her imagination of their elocution, and she possessed by nature, such a remarkable power over the organs of speech that she could always rely upon them in giving utterance on the stage, to her nicest conceptions. Dr. Rush speaks of her voice as "a mirror for every trait of natural expression, in which one might recognize his deep, unuttered sympathy, and love the flattering picture as his own. All that is smooth," he adds, "and flexible, and various in intonation, all that is impressive in force, and in long-drawn time, all that is apt upon the countenance, and consonant in gesture, gave their united energy, gracefulness, grandeur, and truth, to this one great model of Ideal Elocution. Hers was that height of excellence, which, defying mimicry, can be made imaginable only by being equaled.

"Such was my enthusiastic opinion, before a scrutiny into speech had developed a boundless scheme of criticism and instruction; which, in admitting that nature may hold within her laws, the unrevealed power of producing occasional instances of rare accomplishment of voice; yet assures us, that nothing but the influence of some system of principles, founded on a knowledge of those laws, can ever produce multiplied examples of excellence, or give to any one the perfection of art. There is a pervading energy in Observative Science which searches, discovers, gathers-together, co-arranges, still amplifies and completes; and which all the means of untrained effort can never reach."*

Some of the greatest poets, who exhibit in their poetry the nicest sense of all the elements of musical expressiveness, are known to have been very imperfect, monotonous readers. Coleridge is an example. "Amongst Coleridge's accomplishments," says De Quincey, alluding, in his "Literary Reminiscences," to Coleridge's lectures on Poetry and the Fine Arts, at the Royal Institution, "good reading was not one; he had neither voice, nor management of voice." And yet, how wonderfully has he *incarnated* his sentiment in his versification!—"Of the soul, the body form doth take." Witness his *Christabel*, especially the First Part, his *Ancient Mariner*, his *Kubla Khan*, his *Genevieve*, his *Youth and Age*, and numerous other of his poems.

* "The Philosophy of the Human Voice, 5th edition, p. 396.

Byron's reading, too, according to Medwin, was a sing-song; and the present Laureate of England, the musical effects of whose poetry in suggesting subtlety of feeling, have never been surpassed, is said to read like a school-boy. Edgar Poe is represented to have been a most monotonous, uninteresting reader, and yet he composed one of the most melodious poems in our Literature. I allude to his *Ulalume*, which is as beautifully, strangely, and significantly modulated as it is possible for language to be.

But it would be absurd to suppose that these poets did not appreciate their own melodies when they produced them;—that they were mere passive *Æolian* harps, giving forth sounds to which they themselves were deaf. They no doubt had a profounder sense of them as conductors of feeling, than the most perfect reader would be able to express. This being the case, why did their reading so belie their conceptions? The answer is easily given, and it affords the best argument against the sticklers for what is called *natural reading*, namely, that the fullest appreciation of a poem, and the most searching sense of all its subtlest elements of effect, are totally inadequate to a proper vocal expression of it, where the organs of speech are not in perfect obedience to the will and the feelings. This obedience can only be secured by long and careful culture. The conscious observance of principles and rules, must become unconscious and spontaneous. A poet's organs of speech are as likely to be rigid

and unmanagable as those of a boor, and in such case, no degree of imagination and feeling will render them flexible without special culture.

We often hear the advice given, and it frequently constitutes about all that some professors of the art have to impart on the subject, "Enter into the *spirit* of what you read, read *naturally*, and you will read well."

This constitutes the sum and substance of what the learned Bishop Whately teaches on the subject in his "Elements of Rhetoric." In Part IV., Chap. II., § 2, of this work, he says: "Nature, or custom, which is a second nature, suggests spontaneously the different modes of giving expression to different thoughts, feelings, and designs, which are present to the mind of any one who, without study, is speaking in earnest his own sentiments. Then, if this be the case, why not leave nature to do her own work?" This question may perhaps be satisfactorily answered by asking another: If reason is a natural gift of man, and no one will deny that it is, why did the learned Archbishop of Dublin take the trouble to write such a good book as he did on the science and art of reasoning? Why did he not leave nature to do her own work? The gift of reason can hardly be more perverted than the gift of speech, and if earnestness is all that is required to give an unrestrained play to the functions of the latter, why should it not be equally available in respect to those of the former? But every

one's experience will tell him that *earnest* reasoning is not necessarily *sound* reasoning — it often shoots very far from the mark.

"Impress but the mind," the Archbishop goes on to say, "fully with the sentiments, &c. to be uttered; withdraw the attention from the sound, and fix it on the sense; and nature, or habit, will spontaneously suggest the proper Delivery."

Such instruction as this is not unlike that which Hamlet gives to Guildenstern for playing upon the flute, and would be about as efficacious:

Hamlet. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guildenstern. My lord, I cannot.

Hamlet. I pray you.

Guildenstern. Believe me, I cannot.

Hamlet. I do beseech you.

Guildenstern. I know no touch of it, my lord.

Hamlet. 'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

Guildenstern. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony: *I have not the skill.*

Walking, it will be admitted, is as natural a function as talking and reasoning, and much more easily performed. When we study the wonderful mechanism of the human body, the inference is readily drawn that Nature designed that all our movements should be in the highest degree graceful. But so far is this

from being the case, that scarcely one person in a thousand knows how to walk with any degree of grace. In our movements, as in the exercise of our vocal and reasoning powers, we have all gone astray, and it is only by special training, based upon principles deduced from careful observation, that we can realize Nature's purposes. Science and art do not attempt anything different from these purposes, but only aim to fulfil them more effectually.

Milton says of Eve, when fresh from the hands of her Creator,

“ Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture, dignity and love.”

But her sons and daughters have long lost the primæval grace and dignity. They exist only in marble and on canvas.

Now every one will be ready to admit that the advice given to one who walks clumsily and awkwardly, to enter into the *spirit* of the act, to be in earnest, and to walk naturally, would be very inadequate to the case. A more availing and rational advice would be—develop all the functions of the body in a way that they will be exercised harmoniously and without restraint; but not till then can graceful movements and attitudes be expected. Education can *create* nothing. It can only develop what exists potentially and in germ. All the functions which we exercise, moral, intellectual, and physical, are more or less un-

developed and shackled, and education aims, or should aim, to promote their growth, to remove the shackles, and thus to lift man into an atmosphere of freedom and spontaneity. Principles and rules which are at first *objective*, must become *subjective*. Growth of every kind proceeds from the passive to the active and the spontaneous. Man is passive to the degree that he is undeveloped. As he develops, he becomes more and more a law to himself. The law that was at first written upon tablets of stone is gradually transferred to his mind and his heart; and he may finally break the tablets and forget their existence.

Of all our faculties,—physical, at least,—that of speech is, perhaps, the most imperfectly developed, and is, in consequence, less a law to itself, and the most dependent upon outside principles and rules for its efficient exercise—a fact which the ancient Greeks and Romans recognized and acted upon far more than we do. The great importance which they attached to vocal culture was, indeed, attributable to causes which do not now exist to the same extent. The mystery of printing had not yet been discovered. An ambitious politician could not bawl out a speech in the forum, in violation of all the laws of effective utterance, as our legislators do, with nobody to hear him, and have ten thousand copies printed off and sent to his constituents, and all free of expense to himself, in the bargain. No! he had to face his constituents, and say what he had to say, in the most accomplished manner.

The Athenian orator owed the success of his speech as much to its vocal delivery as to its matter; and if the former was not of a character to please his susceptible countrymen, he spoke in vain. But if the *same* causes do not now exist for the highest vocal culture, there are others which do, and which are infinitely more weighty. The Greek and Roman religion was a mere *cultus*, with nothing to teach. But the Christian religion is distinguished from all others by its being a religion of the Book, by its teaching of doctrines, and this teaching is done throughout all Christendom chiefly through the medium of the voice. And yet, strange to say, the grand importance of a special vocal culture for an effective discharge of this great office, is almost entirely overlooked! Were the voices of those destined for the sacred ministry of Christ carefully tuned for the delivery of the great spiritual truths which they are commissioned to promulgate, what an increased vitality, and power, and impressiveness, would be imparted to their teachings! The Bible too—what a new life could be given to it, were all the capabilities which it possesses for effective reading, fully developed by an accomplished voice—capabilities greater, even if we regard it in its purely literary character, than those possessed by any other book!

“O the holiness of their living, and the painfulness of their preaching,” exclaims the old English divine, Thomas Fuller. The good man used the word *painfulness* in a sense different from its present: he meant

that the early apostles took great pains in their preaching. "Many things," says Archbishop Trench, "would not be so 'painful' in the present sense of the word, if they had been more 'painful' in the earlier, as perhaps some sermons." To carry this remark a little further, many sermons would not be so painful in the present sense of the word, if *the cultivation of the voice* were made a more prominent feature of theological education. Vocal culture seldom constitutes a part of the organism of our colleges and theological schools. It is an outside thing, wholly incidental. A travelling elocutionist will happen to come along, a mere adventurer—an unworthy disciple of Thespis, perhaps, with a very slim intellectual outfit. He proposes to work miracles. A class is accordingly formed among the students, for a course of ten lessons, it may be. Some exercises in articulation are bawled over, which, in the words of Othello, "frighten the isle from its propriety." The self-styled professor pockets their money, obtains some extravagant testimonials to the excellence of his system, from the D.D.'s and LL.D.'s of the college, and goes on his way, rejoicing, and the unfortunate students are again left to shift for themselves until some other adventurer comes along, to hoodwink them again with professions of miracle-working.

"If any one would sing," says Ware, "he attends a master, and is drilled in the very elementary principles; and only after the most laborious process, dares

to exercise his voice in public. . . . If he were learning to play on the flute for public exhibition, what hours and days would he spend, in giving facility to his fingers, and attaining the power of the sweetest and most expressive execution. If he were devoting himself to the organ, what months and years would he labour, that he might know its compass, and be master of its keys, and be able to draw out, at will, all its various combinations of harmonious sound, and its full richness and delicacy of expression.

“And yet he will fancy that the grandest, the most various and most expressive of all instruments which the Infinite Creator has fashioned by the union of an intellectual soul with the powers of speech, may be played upon without study or practice; he comes to it a mere uninstructed *tyro*, and thinks to manage all its stops, and command the whole compass of its varied and comprehensive power. He finds himself a bungler in the attempt, is mortified at his failure, and settles it in his mind for ever that the attempt is vain.”

“The art of reading well,” says Dr. Rush, in his “Philosophy of the Human Voice,” “is an accomplishment, that all desire to possess, many think they have already, and that a few set-about to acquire. These, believing their power is altogether in their ‘Genius,’ are, after a few lessons from an Elocutionist, disappointed at not becoming themselves at once masters of the art; and with the restless vanity of their belief, abandon the study, for some new subject of trial and

failure. Such cases of infirmity result in part from the wavering character of the human tribe; but they chiefly arise from defects in the usual course of instruction. Go to some, may we say all of our Colleges and Universities, and observe how the art of speaking *is not* taught there. See a boy of but fifteen years, with no want of youthful diffidence, and not without a craving desire to learn, sent upon a stage, pale and choking with apprehension; being forced into an attempt to do that, without instruction, which he came purposely to learn; and furnishing amusement to his classmates, by a pardonable awkwardness, that should be punished, in the person of his pretending but neglectful preceptor, with little less than scourging. Then visit a Conservatorio of music; observe there, the elementary outset, the orderly task, the masterly discipline, the unwearied superintendence, and the incessant toil to reach the utmost accomplishment in the Singing-Voice; and afterwards do not be surprised that the pulpit, the senate, the bar, and the chair of medical professorship, are filled with such abominable drawlers, mouthers, mumblers, clutterers, squeakers, chanters, and mongers in monotony! nor that the Schools of Singing are constantly sending abroad those great instances of vocal wonder, who triumph along the crowded resorts of the world; who contribute to the halls of fashion and wealth, their most refined source of gratification; who sometimes quell the pride of rank, by a momentary sensation of envy; and who

draw forth the admiration, and receive the crowning applause of the Prince and the Sage."

The prescribed limits of this Essay will not allow me to carry this subject further than merely to advert to one other point—namely, the importance of a careful vocal culture, and, what must always accompany it, a thorough study of the English language and literature, in our female seminaries. Were but half the time devoted to these subjects that is now spent in acquiring a barren smattering of the French language, and of the sciences, how inestimably superior would be the result! The study of her vernacular is a sacred duty devolving upon every woman who would be true to the peculiar mission of her sex. Let her acquire as many foreign tongues as she pleases—the more the better—but she must not, and cannot, justifiably, neglect her native tongue; for to her, more than to man, belongs the high duty of transmitting it to the succeeding generation in its idiomatic purity, free from the affectations and conceits which characterize the diction of the multitudinous productions of would-be authors.

Every woman whose station permits it, should know, and learn to appreciate, all in her native literature that is excellent, forcible, and graceful in style, and pure and beautiful and noble in sentiment; and more than this, she should cultivate that vocal expression of it which would carry it with potency to the hearts of her children.

Great is the *moral* influence which woman's voice

exerts in her family, in society, and in all the relations and responsibilities of life; but the possibilities of this moral influence, which remain to be developed, have hitherto been hardly suspected.

A lady will bestow great care upon her hand, and it is very proper that she should, for among beautiful things, a well-shaped, graceful, and fair hand, certainly does not occupy the lowest rank, and is by no means to be despised. She will jealously guard her face against the effects of sun and wind, with which, also, nobody can find fault;—but how seldom does she think of the power so mighty to charm that lies slumbering in her voice!

When we regard the transcendent personal attractions which nature sometimes bestows upon her favourites, we feel “the might, the majesty of loveliness;” but, alas! how often is the clasping charm rudely unlocked, and the numbing spell thawed, when we hear these angels speak! We wonder that so much harshness can be united with so much beauty.

And then, again, we will meet with one, with whom nature has dealt less generously in the bestowal of personal charms, but whose voice, soft and winning, comes upon us as the dew upon the hill of Hermon. She is idealized by her voice. We see her, not as she actually is, but in a transfiguring light, which softens and symmetrizes many an irregularity of feature and a disproportion of person.

Shakspeare, who has left nothing unsaid, bears a

most affecting witness to the power of woman's voice, in that passage, the sublimest in its pathos which the literature of this world has to show, wherein the heart-broken and desolate old king bewails the death of his daughter Cordelia. By her angelic ministrations, she had become to him, when robbed of every earthly consolation and hope, the only object of interest and affection in the world. While bending over her lifeless form, he mutters to himself these touching words :

" Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low ; an excellent thing in woman."

As the Past glinted through the distracted mind of the desolate father, nothing vibrated so musically in his memory as the *voice* of this dear girl. With it was associated all her

" Little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love."

If the principle of criticism which I have briefly set forth in the First Part of this Essay be admitted, namely, that every literary art-product, especially every true poem, must be at first received in as *passive* a state as possible, that the feelings must ever be the pioneers of the judgment, and that to them must be committed the gathering of material for the discursive understanding, it follows, that that reading of a poem which would not only mirror, but *amplify* and *complete* the poetic feeling of the hearer, would be the best preparation that could be afforded for the after-work

